

Ireland vol 18.

A
L E T T E R

FROM AN
IRISH GENTLEMAN
IN LONDON,
TO
HIS FRIEND,
IN DUBLIN.
ON THE
PROPOSED SYSTEM
OF
COMMERCE.

L O N D O N:
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ADVERTISEMENT

FROM

THE EDITOR.

THE following Letter was received in the course of the last month from one of the most tried and distinguished Friends to the rights and interests of Ireland. The information it conveys is of so important a nature, and the observations with which it is interspersed, throw so strong a light on the great subject that at present agitates the two countries, that the Gentleman, to whom it was addressed, has obtained his correspondent's permission to make it public. And, at his particular request, it is inscribed,
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

JULY 2, 1785.

A

L E T T E R

FROM AN

IRISH GENTLEMAN, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM sorry that you should have so much apparent reason to complain of my silence. Three months have passed, since I promised to transmit to you uninterrupted accounts of the proceedings of the Parliament of this country, in adjusting the proposed system of commerce between the two kingdoms; at the same time, I undertook to accompany these accounts with my own observations on the various interests that might be involved in the progressive discussion of this important question.—I have failed in my promise;—you accuse me of want of zeal for the interests of my native country, and of inattention to my friend.

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But my defence, though short, will I trust be satisfactory. To what purpose should I have troubled you with a narrative of proceedings which were certain to be reversed before I could have time to report them? What end could it have answered to explain regulations, which were proposed one day, only to give way to others of a directly contrary tendency the next?—or what opinions could I have submitted to you, either on the general outline of the system, or on any particular article that formed the detail, when every hour's experience shewed me that all such opinions might be rendered nugatory and inapplicable by the total dereliction of the principle, or by the complete change of the provision on which they would have been founded?

This is my excuse. You will see that it is not framed for the purpose. I take it from the History of the Irish Resolutions from the hour of their being introduced into the British Parliament, to that in which they passed from the crucible of the Committee of the Commons, to settle and deposit their sediments in the House of Lords. I take it from the * PARTY COLOURED comments which
you

* The original Resolutions.—Mr. Pitt's new Resolutions, and the Amendments moved by Opposition; which as they have already been published in the Volunteers Journal and other papers, we shall omit here.

you will find in the enclosed paper, hiding and overwhelming the text ;—from the long catalogue of alterations and amendments, which the Minister, with the most unembarrassed pliancy, and with a versatility unrestrained by plan or principle, either suggested or adopted, until the very BASIS of the proposed treaty has been FUNDAMENTALLY REVERSED, until the EXISTING COMPACT between the two kingdoms has been ESSENTIALLY VIOLATED; and until Ireland is called on to renounce even her present advantages, and to saddle herself with new and oppressive TAXES and RESTRAINTS.

You recollect how much we differed in our opinions, respecting the original Propositions, as they were offered to our Parliament by the government of Great Britain. You rejoiced in the prospect of unhopèd-for benefits, which the Propositions displayed to our country. With a laudable partiality to the place of our birth, you were impatient to congratulate me on the great revolution that was to take place in the trade and politics of the empire. Your perfect knowledge of the subject led you to foresee that the two kingdoms must, in course of time, change places in the federal system. You eagerly anticipated the emigration of British manufacturers, and the

transfer of British commerce ; and in company with these, you saw the wealth, power, and consequence of the elder passing to the younger state. But you accused me of paradox, and imputed to me a contradiction in terms, when I agreed with you thus far ; and yet contended that, in the end, the system must prove destructive to the essential interests of Ireland. “ What was the transfer but “ from one SISTER STATE to another ? What “ was the object of the treaty but a friendly interchange of reciprocal advantages between the “ members of one and the same empire ? ” These and similar arguments you urged with your usual spirit and ingenuity. But I called your attention from words to facts. I took you down from the airiness of speculation to the palpability of practice. I compelled you to agree with me, that a diminution of the resources of Great-Britain must be the inevitable consequence of this emigration of her manufacturers ; and that this transfer of her commerce must be followed by the failure of those revenues which she had pledged for the payment and interest of the debts of the empire. I found you willing enough to acknowledge, that no provision was made in the treaty, that should bind Ireland to pay any proportion of the enormous burdens, under which Great-Britain actually labours, in consequence of those debts. Nay, you even

even contended that it would be unjust to call upon Ireland to contract such an engagement.— There was nothing, you said, even in the great advantages held out to her by the treaty, that could enable her to contribute any proportion towards the discharge of the present public incumbrances, or the future support of the public credit.

After these concessions and declarations on your part, I adhered to my own opinions. Your arguments, for once, lost their power of conviction. Not all their weight, joined to my own national partialities, could make me discover either sisterhood or reciprocity in the proposed arrangements; All I could see was DEFALCATION OF REVENUE, LOSS OF PUBLIC CREDIT, and consequent BANKRUPTCY to Great-Britain; and in that prospect all my triumphs ended. I could find nothing in my observations, or in my judgment, that could make me separate the ruin of Ireland from the ruin of Great-Britain.

But however we may have differed in sentiment, respecting the original Propositions, you and I can have but one opinion of them in their present state. What I foretold to you, but what you refused to credit, is come to pass. The Irish Propositions have not been ratified by the British Parliament.

Parliament. The power of the Minister, which was to COMMAND IMMEDIATE ACQUIESCENCE, has proved ineffectual, when opposed by the universal sense of the nation. His obstinacy has been broken down, and constrained to give way before the notoriety of the danger, to which his ignorance exposed the whole union of the empire. It could not have been otherwise. Human nature must have changed its very essence, and every feeling of self-interest, of local attachment, of national partiality and predilection, must have been rooted out of the heart before the Propositions could have been adopted by a British legislature, in their original form.

It was, from considering the measure in this view, you may remember, that I have ever looked upon the persons who negotiated this business on the part of Ireland, to be no better friends to their native country. Instead of establishing friendship, I knew they were sowing the seeds of fresh enmities. They were wantonly provoking the desires of Ireland, and inciting her to urge impolitic demands, which either could not be granted, or which, if granted, must be at the expence of Great-Britain; and consequently must be productive of discontents and heart-burnings on the part of Great-Britain. And who is the friend

friend of Ireland that will maintain, that whatever tends to loosen the remaining ties that bind the two kingdoms together, or that may terminate in an encrease of mutual animosities and mutual jealousies, must not be destructive to Ireland. To reverse the situation of the two countries, and to substitute British jealousies, for Irish jealousies, and British complaints for Irish complaints, can be no lessening to the common danger. The effect must be the same, whether the elder sister thinks she has to dread an usurping and insatiate rival in the younger; or the younger a selfish, envious and obstinate monopolist in the elder.— In either case, the bond of affection and the unity of interests, which are the strongest, and I might say, the only links that can at present connect us together, are dissolved. The subjects of the aggrieved kingdom, be it which it may, can no longer stand in the equal and friendly relation of fellow-citizens with the subjects of the other.— The interests that should harmonize are rendered discordant—the spirits become every day more irritated and inflamed—the common enemy avails himself of the incurable evil—and the country that stands most in need of protection, throws herself into the arms of a foreign power, differing from her in laws, in constitution, in religion,

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I know not what PRIVATE VIEWS these negociators might have to promote. I have heard of such ; I have heard, that to make atonement for former encroachments on the popular interests, and to acquire some recommendation to popular favour, was the least culpable of the motive by which the principal person was actuated. But I am convinced, whatever popularity he could have gained by the success of his scheme, would have arisen from popular deception, or popular ignorance. It would have been but the deception of a day ; and to the author of the deception the event would have been the same with what has ever been experienced by those false friends of the people, who, under a shew of serving, lead them to their ruin.

The following assertions I will hazard, and with the greatest confidence, from the knowledge I have of the character and dispositions of my countrymen ; I will throw every consideration of policy out of the question : I will suppose that Ireland might thrive upon the ruins Great-Britain. I will suppose that when Great-Britain should be no longer able to protect her, she might be equally prosperous, and equally secure of her constitution and religion under the protection of France. I will risk the whole question upon her known honour

honour and generosity, and will consent to her forfeiting her universally established character for these, her innate virtues, if on a general explanation and thorough knowledge of the injustice of the original system to Great-Britain, her universal voice would not have been to reject it; my countrymen would have said, " We wish for a participation of general commerce with their sister kingdom, but God forbid that we should invade or injure the British commerce. Free and independent as Great Britain we claim, as our right, the same freedom and independence of trade which she enjoys; but we do not wish to exercise that right any further than is consistent with her essential interests; from which we know our own interests are inseparable. We will not hesitate to accept even FAVOURS from Great-Britain; but we DEPRECATE, we will REJECT, all INJURIOUS SACRIFICES on her part; we disdain to enrich ourselves at her expence. Let the advantages of each kingdom be impartially considered by practical men, the most conversant in business, and the best qualified to instruct and inform Government. Let these advantages be balanced on a broad unequivocal basis of EQUITABLE interchange, and ACKNOWLEDGED RECIPROCITY; thus mutual benefit will produce mutual confidence; and

“ we shall cease to look upon each other with cold
“ hearts and suspicious eyes.”

This, I am persuaded, would have been the language of Ireland, had the system been properly explained to her people. Such, I am persuaded, would have been the declarations of her merchants and manufacturers, had they been consulted previous to the formation of the arrangement, or had they been suffered to appear before Parliament, to deliver their opinions after the Propositions had been framed. But I have in a former letter, acquainted you with the history of the negotiation, I have led you into the secrets of that inauspicious *triumvirate*.* I have exhibited them to you caballing in the recesses of the Treasury-Chambers, and there plotting a dark and mischievous enterprise against the two States, instead of an open and authorised communication for establishing a satisfactory adjustment between them, conformable to the wishes or desires of either. From you, I have learned in what manner the resolutions were carried in Ireland. I recollect, with indignation, the insulting importunity, the intemperate and indecent exertion of influence in the Irish Ministry, and the headlong credulity and childish eagerness

* Mr. P—t, Mr. P—r, Mr. B—d.

eagerness of the Irish Parliament. What a disgrace, my friend, has been entailed upon our deliberative councils!—Not a merchant consulted;—not a manufacturer called to the bar of either House;—not a single evidence produced, to discover if there was nothing in the system that could either prejudice the general interests of the empire (in which we have now as great a stake, and for which we should now be equally solicitous as Great-Britain) or injure any particular branch of our manufactures, which are under the peculiar protection of our Parliament. A pompous and sounding speech from the British Secretary contained document, evidence, demonstration; and for delay, for farther information, for deliberation and judgment:—"What! shall we wait till
 " Great-Britain has time to discover the scope and
 " tendency of the Resolutions:—will her manu-
 " facturers are made acquainted with the danger,
 " and take the alarm?"—Shame! shame! Can this be credited hereafter? The great Deliberative Council of an independent kingdom meet to consult about the expediency of a national compact; a compact that involves the nearest and dearest interests of the subject, that is to be binding for ever; that is to lay the foundation of eternal confidence and eternal amity with another independent state, whose happiness and prosperity are declared

to be inseparable from their own. They ratify this compact; they confirm it in all its parts, without a moment's deliberation; without requiring or receiving the slightest information on the subject; without taking a single day to consult their constituents:—And what is their plea? —To keep the other contracting party, *their Sister State, with whom they have solemnly pledged themselves to stand or fall*, from discovering the injustice that is plotting against her; and the irreparable injury her subjects are to sustain by the bargain. Is this among the first great and solemn acts of our independent legislature? But far be it from me to confound the people of Ireland with its parliament. The people of Ireland are yet free from this stain on the national character. It is a taint of the old and inveterate infection which required all the virtue and energy of the national assembly at Dungannon to correct; and which nothing but the same energy and virtue, called again into action, can eradicate.

But the indulgence that was denied by the Irish Ministry to the merchants and manufacturers of Ireland, the British Minister in the plenitude of his power, did not dare to withhold from the merchants and manufacturers of Great Britain. They forced upon him, in Parliament, that information
which

ch he was too proud and too confident of his own abilities to ask of them in his closet. They demanded to be heard by their representatives; —and so lasting and forcible are the impressions which the antient and awful institutes of the constitution still leave upon the public mind in this declining country, that not even the present House of Commons could be tampered with, or intimidated into a refusal to hear the voice of their constituents.

The consequence of this deference to the public anxiety was an absolute and total reversal of the system. Such information was then thrown upon the subject as alarmed the Minister himself; and convinced him, at length, that he had been deceived and misled. And from the extreme of injury to Great-Britain, he made but a single step to the extreme of injury to Ireland: Of his own free motion, and in conjunction with some Irish individuals of his own selecting, he had wantonly exposed the commerce of Great-Britain to manifest ruin; he, with equal wantonness, and with the same unadvised precipitancy, lets destruction loose against the whole Irish nation. He not only attempts to load her commerce with new and oppressive chains, but he would even rob her of the independence which her people associated to obtain,

tain, that they might protect her commerce, and give it both value and security.

Why should I recall to your mind circumstances and times in which you bore so distinguished a part. The first fruits of the glorious league of our Volunteers was the emancipation and enlargement of our trade. Great Britain yielded ; (no matter with what grace,) but still she retained the power of resumption : we then had 'a nominal legislature, which had for ages submitted to be bound by her laws : What she granted as an act of favour she might recal by an act of power. The spirit of the nation, roused by long sufferings into a proper feeling of itself, (*Quæ sera tamen respexit,*) foresaw the danger, and determined to render its redemption complete ; we claimed independency, we claimed constitution ; and we claimed them among other great and dignified purposes, that they might be the guardians of that commerce which we had recently obtained.

But what is the present attempt ! under an insidious pretence of granting us the *ne plus ultra* of trade, and of compleating what is said to have been left imperfect in our commercial emancipation.—we are required to relinquish our constitution ; we are to pass once more under the yoke
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of dependency; because a phantom of advantages has been conjured up before our eyes to vanish in an instant, and mock our expectations; we are again to submit to be governed by British laws, and to extend that submission to all that is most odious in legislation, the restraining of trade, and the levying of taxes upon our consumption.

The * fourth resolution, as it stands in the note, came from the mouth of Mr. Pitt himself. It expressly provides, *that all laws that have been made, or shall be made in Great Britain, SHALL BE IN FORCE in Ireland.* Is not this the fullest and most unqua-

* The fourth Resolution proposed by Mr. Pitt was, that it is highly important to the general interests of the British Empire, that the laws for regulating trade and navigation should be the same in Great-Britain and Ireland; and therefore that it is ESSENTIAL, towards carrying into effect the present settlement, that all laws which have been made, or shall be made in Great-Britain, for securing exclusive privileges to the ships and mariners of Great-Britain, Ireland, and the British Colonies and Plantations, SHALL BE IN FORCE in Ireland, in the same manner as in Great-Britain; and that proper measures should from time to time be taken for effectually carrying the same into execution.

By Mr. Eden's amendment, the Resolution was altered to its present form.

Lord Beauchamp, proposed omitting all the words from IRELAND, TO, AND THAT PROPER MEASURES.

unqualified resumption of the right of legislation on the part of Great Britain that words could frame? Is there in the whole resolution the most distant reference or allusion either to the previous assent, or to the subsequent ratification of the Irish Parliament? We have not even the *complimentary* softening contained in the amendment. You see a broad *declaratory* resolution, meant to be passed into an act of both Parliaments, for destroying the glorious work of the *Grattans*, the *Burghs*, and the *Brown'ows*, for subverting the beautiful fabric, consecrated to our recovered liberty, by the VOLUNTEERS of Ireland.

The fifth and eight resolutions were also proposed by Mr. Pitt. They now stand ratified by the British House of Commons. Of their dangerous tendency, the petition from Belfast has already in part, warned our countrymen. "They subject us even to be TAXED at the discretion of a foreign Parliament." They leave us no option, either as to the expediency of the impositions, their nature, or their quantity. They require us to charge ourselves with a *perpetual revenue*, in violation of the first principles of general freedom: And the measure of that revenue is to be the will of the British Parliament, in open contempt of our independency. But this is not all. The unqualified

qualified submission is also to extend to all *occasional regulations* of the Parliament of Great Britain. Even the adulatory clause of the duties being to be laid, and the regulations being to be adopted, by *laws passed in both kingdoms*, is omitted. No softening whatever is applied to this double tyranny. We are first to be compelled to receive the productions of the British colonies, to the exclusion of all other; and subject to restrictions, on the expediency or necessity of which we can have no deliberative power; and then we are to receive them under a tax imposed by a *foreign legislature*. The same restrictions, the same impositions, are to extend to our articles of *export* also; and this implicit submission to the most invidious acts of all-legislative power, is required of us, as an essential condition, as a *sine qua non* to the settlement.

From the Minister's rejection of Lord Beauchamp's amendment, you will perceive how ineffectual the patriotic efforts of the representative of the House of Conway, the grateful and well-informed zeal of Mr. Eden, the force of Mr. Fox's reasoning and eloquence, or the various powers of enlightened genius which Mr. Sheridan has devoted through the whole of this business to the interests of his native country, have proved against the determination that seems to

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have been embraced to risque the whole treaty upon this point.

These friends of Ireland, (and friends of Ireland they have shewn themselves upon this occasion, whatever factious prejudice may insinuate against them,) strenuously opposed the admission of the *principle*. But all they could obtain was a softening of the expression. The poison remains in all its virulence; but it is disguised in a more palatable covering, that we may swallow it with the less reluctance. For how stands the alteration? In the original resolution, as framed by Mr. Pitt, the right of legislation was to be assumed without the smallest qualification, or the least reference to our own legislature. We were to be bound, unconditionally, by acts of the British Parliament. Under the amendments we are equally to be bound by these acts; but the mighty privilege of *registering* them is to be reserved to us. The laws must appear on our statute-books before they become binding upon us; but no choice is reserved for us, whether they shall appear there or not.

It is said, *in words*, that our *consent* is requisite; but under the terms and conditions of the treaty, and with any intention of abiding by them, we have not a single power reserved to withhold, or
even

even to modify that consent. Is not this bringing us back directly to the ground upon which we stood before our emancipation? This *privilege* of *registering the commercial regulations* of the British legislature we enjoyed in the very worst days of our dependence and servility: We enjoyed it at the time of our compact under Lord North's administration. The duties we then agreed to submit to, upon the importation of West-India commodities, could only be imposed by acts of our own, adopting the regulations of the British Parliament. At that period we were not *bound* to exclude ourselves *for ever* from all other colonial markets. The regulations, at that period, only extended to our *importations*. Our *Exportations* (except in the article of iron ware) which was settled by particular agreement between the manufacturers of both countries, were subject to no other controul than that of our own Parliament. But by the proposed Resolutions, we are to exclude ourselves for ever from all colonial markets, but the British; and we are to subject every article, as well of our *exports* as *imports*, to whatever burdens or regulations the British legislature may choose to impose upon them,

The only alternative, even tacitly left us, will be to renounce at once all the terms

of the treaty, to risque an open breach with Great Britain, to throw the interests of the two kingdoms again a float, and to plunge still deeper into all those disputes, jealousies, and animosities, which it is the professed object of the proposed agreement to obviate for ever.

If the power of ORIGINATING the regulation, and imposts were to be RECIPROCAL, I might admit that something like an equality of independence would be preserved to Ireland. But no such power is stipulated. They must originate, exclusively, and for ever, in the British Parliament; WE are no more to be called upon to deliberate on their expediency, than we are allowed to object to REGISTER, and to be bound by them after they are enacted. They are LAWS either *passed*, or *hereafter to be passed in Great Britain*.—*They must be in force for the same time, and in the same manner as in Great Britain.*

But we are bound by these laws, “ only in as much as they impose the same restraints and confer the same benefits on the subjects of both kingdoms.”—I know that in Ireland there were ONCE popular words: they formed the basis of an act of our parliament that made the author of it dear to his country. But, in fact, they have
nothing

nothing to do with the great point at issue. Mr. Eden, in moving the clause, declared that he only wished to get by it as much as he could for IRELAND. He wished to secure something for her INTEREST, since nothing could be preserved for her CONSTITUTION. God knows, it would be hard to say what he has gained even for her INTEREST. For I should beg to know with what propriety SIMILAR impositions on the articles of British and Irish imports and exports can, in their present comparative situations, be called EQUAL impositions. Can the infant commerce of Ireland, in the soft bone and gristle of its tender years, bear the same burdens and endure the same restraints as the full grown hardy manhood of the British trade? Regulations under which the one might thrive and flourish, would crush and annihilate the other. But I repeat it; these considerations have nothing to do with the POLITICAL injury we are to sustain from the adoption of these resolutions. The PRINCIPLE of re-assumed legislation on the part of Great Britain still remains, independent of every commercial advantage we may acquire by our degenerate acquiescence. Who ever doubted that SLAVERY may not be gainful? But was it a spirit of gain that convened the national delegates at Dungannon?—Was it a spirit of

of gain that united constituents, representatives, nobles, volunteers, associations, religions, in one vast indissoluble league, fired with one soul, and pressing forward to one object?—Or was it the pure spirit of liberty rousing the people to resort to themselves, to accomplish their final redemption from subordination and subserviency, and to do away for ever the PRINCIPLE, that had so long kept their fathers and themselves under an ignominious and intolerable yoke?—What can have encouraged Great Britain to adopt this change of language to Ireland?—On what do they presume, that they should address themselves to the meanest of our passions, after our having lately, by a display of the noblest, triumphed over British prejudices, and astonished the rest of the world? Shall they be suffered to insult us by an appeal to our venality against our ambition; or to our avarice against that dignified pride, and feeling of character, that sets one nation above the other; and that has so lately awakened in the breasts of Irishmen a becoming conception of themselves, and a lofty sense of the consequence and eminence of their country?

But it will be said, the independency of your legislature is IMPLIED in the very proposition that is reprobated as subversive of that independency.

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The ACKNOWLEDGMENT is CONVEYED in the
 avowed NECESSITY of YOUR CONSENT.

These arguments have been started on this side of the water, and I make no doubt but you will hear them repeated on yours. But is our sense and feeling of freedom so suddenly blunted? Have we so suddenly lost the relish and enjoyment of pure and genuine independency, that we shall be expected to sit down contented with this cold, lifeless, passive substitute? Was this the independency for which the nation met to communicate as at the altar? Was it for a claim that was to be asserted only to lie dormant, that we formed a league to stand together as one man?—For a mere abstract right?—Or was it for an honourable and profitable enjoyment of the right;—for an *active, energetic, self-impelling, self-directing principle*, inherent in ourselves, and indivisible, operating PRIMARILY in every thing that regarded our own internal and external polity, and paramount to every other power upon earth, secondary or hand-maid to none?

Look again to the days that are past. Was the nation content with the *tacit surrender* of the right of British legislation conveyed in the repeal of the 6th of George the First? Did we stop at the
implied

implied acknowledgment of independency conveyed in that repeal? Did our ardour cool, or our perseverance abate, until we had obtained a formal, explicit, unequivocal renunciation of every principle and exercise of supremacy, (whatever disguise or shape they might assume?) An absolute declaration, by a solemn act of the three estates of Great Britain, of the uncontrollable, unlimitable independency of our legislature in all matters, as well commercial as political, external as well as internal? Surely, my dear Sir, the record of these transactions is not so far removed; the memory of them is not so distant and faint that they are to be supposed to have lost their impression on the minds of Irishmen of the present day.

We read of many nations, who have degenerated from the example of their ancestors. A long lapse of time, and the ever-varying rotation of events have changed and debased their minds into a forfeiture of rights which they had inherited. Shall we be the first to degenerate from *our own* example? Shall there scarce be a point in the succession of time, between our emancipation and our relapse into slavery? Shall we relinquish in *our own persons* those rights which we purchased in *our own persons*, and by exertions of

of so peculiar a character, as not only raised us above our own level, but promised us a place above the greatest nations, ancient or modern?

I cannot think this possible. I cannot think so poorly of the distinguished characters; I will not say who led, but, certainly, who encouraged and invigorated the spirit that pervaded the whole mass of the people of Ireland in their late successful struggle. Can I believe that the father of Irish independency will so soon forget the HONOURS he received from his country? I say the honours, not the REWARDS; for I know Mr. Grattan too well to think that he would have received the REWARDS in any other light than that of HONOURS.

Can I believe that, forgetful of the indignation with which he put the question to himself on the day of his glory, he will "take the civic crown off his head, and go under the subjection of the British Parliament?" Or if Mr. Grattan* were capable of exhibiting so lamentable a proof of human weakness, and of the fallibility of human virtue, would the other great personages, who associated

* This Gentleman has not deceived the expectations of our correspondent.

sociated with him in that glorious work, associate also with him in apostacy? Would they declare themselves content with PALLIATIVES and QUALIFICATIONS, and IMPLIED ACKNOWLEDGMENTS of those redeemed rights which were to have been handed down with their own spotless characters to our latest posterity? Would the Volunteers too combine against their own cause? If such degeneracy could possibly reach individuals, it would be monstrous to suppose that it could pervade a nation.

These are the opinions, and these the observations which a close attention to the meaning and tendency of the Propositions, introduced by Mr. Pitt, in explanation of the original second Resolution, have suggested to my mind, when considered with a view to the CONSTITUTION of Ireland. In their effects upon our general commerce, they appear to me to be equally alarming and ruinous. They reverse the very SPIRIT, PRINCIPLE and TENDENCY of the original Resolutions: they secure no benefits to Great-Britain beyond what she now enjoys; but they call upon Ireland to relinquish even her present advantages, and to load herself with new and oppressive restraints. I will not trouble you with a long detail. A few short observations on the present
state

state of the commerce of Ireland, and the change which the Resolutions are calculated to effect, will be sufficient to support my opinions.

Ireland has, AT PRESENT, the market with the British colonies in the West-Indies and on the coast of Africa, open to her merchants on the same terms as it is open to Great-Britain. After the expiration of the present charter of the Company, the market of the East-Indies will be also open to her. Her trade with the United States of America is unclogged and unfettered: a trade which has been the great object of all her commercial desires; which alone would afford a vent to all her articles of export, and which offers to her the amplest source of the most lucrative exchange. To all the countries of Europe, Great-Britain excepted, she can export every article of her merchandize, whether native or imported, and she can bring back her returns of every species without any other restraint, either on the export or the import, than what the policy of her own Parliament may at times think essential to the general interests of the kingdom. In every one of these branches, which embrace the whole trade that Ireland does or can enjoy, the new system, in its amended state, will operate to her disadvantage. Her commerce with the British colonies is to be clogged

in the very first instance with expences and difficulties from which it is now exempt; and, in future, it is *for ever* to be exposed to new restraints, unknown and undefined. From all connection with the countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope, to the Streights of Magellan, whether foreign or British, she is to be peremptorily excluded, as long as the Parliament of England shall think proper to continue to the Company its present monopoly. Her trade with the States of America is to be regulated *entirely* and *exclusively* by the British legislature. The sixteenth Resolution destroys, at one stroke, all the hopes she had conceived from that rising commerce, and from the favour and predilection with which she is considered by the Colonists, and invited to their ports. In her connexions with foreign European States, she is to attend to all the fluctuations and changes in their intercourse with Great Britain. In short, her whole commercial code is to be settled for her by a foreign jurisdiction, on the scale of its own peculiar interests.

The ports of Great-Britain are indeed to be opened to her for the admission of various commodities, which the present laws exclude. But you will observe, that the *reciprocity*, which was to have formed the basis of the agreement, and
which

which was held out to our hopes in the original Propositions, is, by the amended Resolutions, effectually destroyed. Several articles, by which our trade would have been peculiarly benefited, are to be excepted from the general indulgence. In these articles the war of prohibitions and prohibitory duties is still to be carried on against Ireland, whilst the power of retaliation is to be denied to her, and all arms of defence are to be taken out of her hands. In every other article countervailing duties (equally burdensome and intolerable to Irish commerce in its actual state) are to be substituted to prohibitory duties. The whole of our intercourse is to be loaded with expensive and vexatious regulations of bonds, cockets, and other instruments, at present unknown to our merchants.

The effect of the new system being, therefore, to cut off or circumscribe the intercourse of Ireland with all the countries, into which she can at present carry her commerce, and to load the new trade in which she is to be indulged to Great-Britain, with burdens and restraints that must more than balance all the natural advantages that might enable her to profit by that trade, all that is to be left to Irish industry is a competition between our manufacturers and the manufacturers
of

of Great-Britain. On this part of the subject, I feel myself incompetent to state my opinions.

The petition from Belfast asserts, that in many instances, the Propositions are calculated to ruin the manufactures of Ireland. I make no doubt but these respectable persons are prepared to prove their assertions before their own Parliament. After what has passed here, the Irish government *dare* not refuse them a hearing; and if they can make good their proof, I will leave it to you to form your opinion of a system that professes to provide for the interests of the manufacturers of both kingdoms, and yet is demonstrated by those very manufacturers to be equally destructive to both.

I have already run this letter to a greater length than I intended or foresaw. Still, however, there remains an important point, on which I cannot be satisfied with myself, unless I declare to you my opinions. You will perceive by Mr. Pitt's Twentieth Resolution, that the nature of the *price*, which Ireland is to *pay* for the supposed benefits to be conferred upon her by the treaty, is entirely altered. Domestic œconomy, and an attention to the discharge of our existing debts, and the balance of our future receipts and expenditure, were stipulated

stipulated by our Parliament, as claims upon the hereditary revenue, necessarily to be attended to previous to all demands for the naval services of the empire, *in times of peace*. In times of war, our exertions for the general defence were only to be bounded by the public exigencies and our own resources.

This stipulation, Mr. Pitt, on the very opening of the Propositions, declared to be inadmissible. It by no means, he said, came up to his idea of *compensation*. He was making a *bargain*, not only for his own *concessions*; but for the concessions of former *unwise and inconsiderate Ministers*. Former Ministers had lavished favours upon Ireland, without *condition*, and without *return*. He must have stronger and more satisfactory *sureties*. Nothing less could content him than a *solemn, legislative, precise compact*, specifying the amount of the price to be given, and proportioning that price as well to profits hereafter to be reaped, as to benefits already enjoyed. For this purpose, the whole of the specified surplus of the hereditary revenue, that is, the whole of what it is pretended the Irish treasury is to gain by the treaty, must be applied to naval services in *time of peace* as well as in *time of war*; and independent of all reference to Irish œconomy,

œconomy, or to the occasional state of the other branches of our finance.

In this most delicate point, therefore, as well as in every other part of the system, the Propositions are radically altered. New principles are laid down, and those in direct violation of the assurances of government in Ireland, and in direct opposition to the declared sense of the Irish parliament. Will Mr. Brownlow, will Mr. Grattan, (who, to reconcile Mr. Brownlow and other independent gentlemen to the provisions of the original tenth Proposition, multiplied its object, and stipulated domestic œconomy as a *primary* consideration); will they accept Mr. Pitt's twentieth Resolution in its present state?

God knows, the whole of this business is an insulting fallacy, meant to mock both nations, and to cheat them out of their conviction. Great Britain knows that she will have *nothing to get*. Ireland knows she will have *nothing to give*. And yet, in establishing this visionary fund, for enabling one nation to pay tribute to the other, an attempt is made, by that spirit that manifests itself through the whole transaction, to undermine our constitution, and to subvert its *leading* and *characteristic privilege*. I wish I could say that the guilt of this attempt

attempt was confined to the British Ministry.— But let it fall where it may, I have no disguise with you. The leading and characteristic privilege of the British constitution is, that all *grants of supplies* should be limited to *one year*. The fathers of the Irish constitution, who founded it in British privileges, have consented that a *grant of supply* should be *perpetual*. In modifying the Proposition, they have submitted to the establishment of the *principle*. They have lent their assistance in fixing a precedent that cuts up by the root, the only controul that the representative body has over the executive, in the respective legislatures of Great-Britain and Ireland.

Was this their boast to Great-Britain, when they exhorted her to ratify the constitutional claims of Ireland, if for no other reason, at least for the security which Great-Britain would acquire for the establishment of her own constitution? What was their language then? “Can any thing
“be more beneficial to Great-Britain, with a declining constitution, than that the Irish nation
“should have the spirit of liberty?” The Irish nation enjoys the fruits of that spirit of liberty. The Irish nation is as free as Great-Britain was ever free; yet one of the first acts of the Irish legislature is to sap and undermine the very foundation

dation of British freedom. "Admit us at once,"
 said they, "into the possession of our birth right,
 "the vigour of our youth will be the prop of
 "your old age. Give us the power and the most
 "glorious service in which it will be our pride
 "to employ it, will be in supporting the crazy
 "frame of your *declining constitution*." We are
 in possession of our birth-right; we have got the
 power;—and yet we are the first to invite, by
 our example, the hand of ambition to subvert the
venerable fabric which we promised to support,
 and to shake the very *rock* on which it has stood
 for ages.

I know that these observations will afford you
 some matter of triumph; you will regret their
 truth, for the sake of your country; but they will
 supply you with additional arguments against me
 in our old disputes on the characters and prin-
 ciples of some of our leading patriots. But
 though I condemn the measure, I cannot consent
 finally to condemn the men. They have been
 surprised, but not corrupted. By this temporary
 cloud on their characters, they suffer the punish-
 ment of their supineness, in permitting those in-
 sidious Propositions to be carried through the
 House with such unbecoming precipitancy. But
 their future exertions will be only the more stren-
 uous

nuous and animated. You will hear again the warning voice that called their country to wealth, to independence, and to freedom. Backed by those brave and resolute spirits, who have supported them in former struggles, they will never suffer new fetters to be put upon that commerce, in the emancipation of which they bore so distinguished a part. They will never renounce the independence of constitution, which they so gloriously asserted for the protection and improvement of that commerce.

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